Empowering the Workforce

Background
Module 5

Background for Module 5: Workforce Empowerment

Compelling Reasons for Empowering the Workforce

In a speech that Vice President Gore gave at Georgetown University on March 29, 1994 he stated that:

"...today we have developed different ideas about human capacity. Individuals within every organization are capable of producing much more than had been previously thought possible by those who assumed that the division between thinking and muscle work was the basis for organization."

The concept that employees can make major, positive contributions to improving the understanding of the workplace and how to enhance productivity is confirmed by several studies. The 1990 GAO study of 20 high quality companies showed a positive correlation between high quality and employee involvement.

Productivity studies also show that when employee involvement is high and employees are empowered to make decisions about their work, then productivity also increases. There is also evidence that high-involvement initiatives are yielding the greatest results. (The reference section starting on page 33 lists the following literature that can provide further details: GAO 1990; Canada Awards for Excellence and Conference Board of Canada; Wellins, et al; Blinder; Byham 1992; Lawler 1988; and Magjuka.)

The national debt now exceeds $4 trillion--$16,600 for every man, woman and child in this country. The public confidence in the government has never been lower. The average American believes that the government wastes 48 cents of every tax dollar. Only 20 percent of Americans trust the federal government to do the right thing--down from 76 percent 30 years ago. With both a budget and trust deficit, we cannot afford to underutilize the ideas and creativity of the federal workforce.

Workforce Empowerment is Key

Ultimately the transformation of an organization depends upon its workforce. It is widely recognized that the federal government can no longer manage its workforce with a command-and-control style. As Vice President Gore has observed, computers and telecommunications have made possible flatter organizations, wider spans of control and much faster information sharing.

Managers and supervisors can recognize errors and low quality, but it takes employees to prevent them. The government has a highly trained workforce. It remains the single largest employer of college graduates. Government employees individually and collectively can create efficient processes and can identify and meet customer needs. Winners of the Presidential Award for Quality and the Quality Improvement Prototype (QIP) Award are demonstrating the impact of employee empowerment.

Objectives

In this module participants will:

! Examine the role of workforce involvement and empowerment in the transformation of government

! Learn how to achieve and support employee involvement and empowerment to improve customer service

! Understand the central role of teamwork

Employee Empowerment

One of the challenges for agencies implementing change efforts is to arrive at a common understanding of empowerment.

Part of the confusion comes from the terminology used. "Employee involvement" and "empowerment" are related terms that are frequently used interchangeably, but have differences in meaning.

Employee involvement means that employees can provide information, ideas, and recommendations to management, and may have the authority and responsibility to do some of the tasks previously carried out by management and to make decisions previously made by management. As employees have

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more opportunities to provide input, as well as a say in how their work will be carried out, the level of involvement increases.

Empowerment occurs when employees sense they have "control" over their jobs; that they are granted authority to decide and to act on decisions; when employees understand the aims of the organization and of their work units and actively work to make the organization more effective; when employees routinely make decisions which affect their work, its scheduling, and its quality; and make decisions affecting their own well-being in the organization.

Empowerment is said to increase as the boundaries within which employees have "control" over their jobs increase. In general, employees value more empowerment rather than less. Employees want to have a say in how work is accomplished and how customer needs are met.

The word empowerment has many dimensions. It is often bounded by people's feeling of what they are authorized to do. It may also be bounded by having been given very specific, focused authorities and responsibilities. For example, people may feel empowered to fix a specific customer complaint because they have been given specific authority to do so and have done so successfully with limited supervision. The same employee may not, however, be empowered to address broader work issues such as work load or schedules because it is clear that the supervisor has that authority.

Empowerment and Accountability

Management is often unaware of what occurs at the front desk or in the field. It is the people who are closest to the problems who frequently know the most about solving them. And they can act more quickly to do so if the power to make decisions is decentralized. When people are empowered to use their judgement, it is important to give them the appropriate tools for the job-- training to do their work and to make decisions cooperatively, as well as good information.

With greater authority comes greater responsibility. Both people and organizations must be accountable for results when they exercise authority. The desired outcomes should be clearly understood and feasible. Results need to be measured as the customer would--by better and more efficiently delivered services.

Expanding Employee Involvement

Employee involvement can be expanded by a combination of approaches. One way is for the agency to increase the percent of the workforce participating in involvement activities. By breaking the paradigm that formal teams are the primary way to initially involve employees, an organization can also encourage its entire workforce to become more involved within the setting of traditional work groups.

Another approach is to increase the degree of involvement by employees. Both employees and managers usually need time to learn about and adjust to their new roles. For example, employees may make improvements in their traditional work groups first, then participate in cross functional teams, and eventually operate as part of a self-directed team. This does not preclude "leap frogging" from low to high involvement, but it is critical to provide the necessary support. An organization may want to pilot this approach first to enhance its chances for success.

The number of opportunities for involvement can also be increased. New activities can be added while such basic initiatives as suggestion programs, surveys or information sharing can continue to play an important role. For example, the nature of information shared should expand to include relevant financial data, benchmarks, program outcomes, etc. Periodic surveys assessing progress against a baseline and highlighting areas that need further improvement are also helpful. Suggestion programs typically change in focus from number of ideas and participants to performance gains and net savings.

Key Elements of Initial Employee Involvement Efforts

This seminar does not offer a prescription for increasing employee involvement in an organization. In fact, experience suggests that a prescribed approach could do more harm than good. No two organizations have the same readiness characteristics. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify important things to think about and general actions that can be taken--strategic decision points--so that managers can select those that are right for their organizations.

Determine the Existing Climate of Employee Involvement

Many managers believe that they manage according to modern management practices that include involvement, but in fact are not perceived as such by

their subordinates. Further, even if the top management of an organization is committed to employee involvement in principle and in fact, subordinate levels of supervisors and managers may not conduct themselves accordingly. It is therefore desirable that the organization conduct an assessment of the existing management practices in the organization.

The initial climate survey (see Module 2, "Visioning the Future and Assessing Current Reality" for more details) should be designed to inquire of all employee levels in the organization, supervisory and non-supervisory, how the existing management and leadership style is perceived. Do leaders manage according to a traditional command-and-control paradigm, or do they routinely involve subordinates in identifying and resolving issues? Do employees perceive that they are listened to and have access to information to enable them to perform their jobs adequately? Do employees have a sense that they understand the critical goals and objectives of the organization and how their work fits into them? Do employees perceive that they have access to decision-makers in order to make changes in their own work that can improve the quality of the products and services they deliver?

Answers to these and other important questions can give a good perspective of the extent to which the organization currently involves workers to meet the organization's mission, and can serve as an indicator of where the organization needs to focus its efforts to involve all workers.

Whatever approach is used to obtain a sense of the current environment, the organization should handle this with care. Top management should plan in advance to share with the entire organization the results of the survey, and determine steps that management should take to address the major issues and concerns that surface. Otherwise, it can have the unintended effect of convincing the organization that management is simply using the effort as a way to avoid addressing the real issues, or worse, as a way to identify malcontents.

Develop a Communication Strategy

One of the first things an organization beginning a transformation effort should do is to examine its current communication style and practices. For example, in the summer of 1993, IRS administered an agency-wide survey. Among the feedback received was the need to address internal communications. Employees indicated they felt that information communicated by their immediate supervisor was the most credible, but that the information needed to be screened so that it was more relevant. IRS is establishing a Communications Division that will encompass both internal and

external communications and will work with other offices to align support for communication efforts. Various communication support activities include: evaluations, training for supervisors, the use of surveys to measure progress, and a tool kit for managers that includes talking points on topics of special interest that need to be discussed with employees (e.g., reorganizations, reinventing government initiatives).

Employees cannot be effectively involved and supportive of organizational goals if they are not aware of what they are and how their own efforts fit into them. One place to start is to ensure that the agency's vision, mission and values are communicated to everyone in the organization. One approach is for the organization leader to hold an open meeting with everyone, in which he/she summarizes the vision, mission and values, and invites dialogue, supplemented by statements in an existing newsletter or memo to everyone in the organization, and by smaller group discussions between managers and employees.

An even more effective approach is to involve everyone in the organization in the formulation and articulation of the organization's vision, values and mission. This can be done by commenting on the draft developed by the top management team, or by obtaining input to the statements in advance. Once the statements are completed, they should be communicated to everyone in the organization. This will help everyone better understand what the organization hopes to accomplish by its change effort, and how they will fit into the effort.

Most leaders of a transformation effort take a hard look at the style and practices of their periodic staff meetings. Usually quality principles and employee involvement issues become a routine part of staff meetings. Managers can use staff meetings to reinforce the employee involvement focus of the organization and raise issues relating to workforce involvement. One technique used is to invite periodic reports from subordinate managers on progress in training or employee involvement initiatives.

Use of newsletters and open letters to staff from the top leader of the organization is another ongoing communication device. If the organization has a newsletter, the leader often includes a letter to employees. Most importantly, the newsletter is used to highlight quality and employee involvement issues: identifying people who have made suggestions resulting in savings, highlighting team successes, and informing everyone of key employee involvement events.

Re-examine and Strengthen Suggestion Programs

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Suggestion programs are one of the most visible manifestations of employee empowerment efforts and frequently one of the least useful. Many organizations already have a suggestion program in place and they need to take a hard look at it. Typical changes required to make suggestion programs truly effective are:

! Make every effort to respond quickly to all suggestions and to act on them if at all possible.

! Establish a system for routinely assessing suggestions and a bias toward adopting suggestions that make sense.

! Recognize and reward individuals who make suggestions that are implemented, and publicize the results periodically.

! Push decisions to act on suggestions to the lowest level possible in the organization. In this case, the suggestion program becomes a part of the organization's comprehensive employee involvement effort, not simply a separate activity.

Establish Labor-Management Partnerships

We can only transform government if we transform the adversarial relationship that has in the past dominated the federal union-management interaction into a partnership for change. Executive Order 12871 requires agencies to create labor-management partnerships.

Some first steps in improving union-management cooperation are to:

! Discuss areas of common interest and the objectives of the transformation

! Invite participation in planning the transformation

! Communicate fully with union leaders concerning the transformation effort and the progress being made

! Discuss roles of union and management in training and in briefings

! Agree on membership of councils, boards, and teams

Provide Education and Training

Education and training are crucial to any effort to upgrade the quality of products and services of an organization, and this is especially true for the employee involvement strategy. The results of a needs and skills assessment can give a good indication of some of the priority areas for the training effort. Much of basic quality training is designed to facilitate teamwork. Typically team members are given training in group dynamics, collective decision-making, and use of tools to help identify root causes and likely solutions to problems. For a more complete discussion of quality training, see the FQI booklet "Education and Training for Total Quality Management in the Federal Government."

Establish Teams

Most people think of teams initially as only formal improvement teams. However employees can be involved in many types of teams, including those in traditional work group settings. This is important to keep in mind when beginning involvement efforts, because formal teams typically involve only a small percentage of the workforce.

Providing Front-Line Employees More Latitude

The NPR report encourages front-line workers to use their creative judgment as they offer services to customers and solve problems. This is reinforced by Executive Order 12862 which encourages agencies to provide training resources for programs needed by employees who directly serve customers, and requires agencies to survey front-line employees on barriers to, and ideas for, matching the best in business.

Culture Changes for High-Involvement

To achieve high-involvement requires not only changes in the organization-- such as job content, communication strategy, and education, which will be discussed next--but also concurrent changes in the behavior of people. How we interact with and treat others affects the degree of employee involvement within an organization.

The following are examples of behavioral characteristics of a high-involvement organization. There is an atmosphere of trust and openness among employees. People are encouraged to be creative, experiment with new ideas and take risks. Mistakes are viewed as a learning experience rather than a reason to blame someone.

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An understanding of customer requirements and the organization's mission, vision, and set of values based on those requirements, guide the behavior and actions of everyone. The climate of high-involvement organizations tends to be informal to collegial, encouraging open communication and teamwork. Employees strive to create win-win solutions, and by doing so stimulate additional involvement. Leaders empower and enable others, instead of giving orders.

For a fuller discussion of organizational culture, see Module 8, "Leading and Managing the Organization" (starting on p. 3 of the Background).

A Strategic Approach to High-Involvement

Not only are changes in behavior necessary to achieve a high-involvement culture, but also changes in the way the organization operates. Behavioral and operational changes need to be simultaneously encouraged and supported. The initial employee involvement efforts previously described are a start, but they are not sufficient to transform an organization to one of high-involvement.

The objective should be to integrate the various principles and techniques reflected in specific employee involvement efforts into the way work is carried out on a day-to-day basis, and to ensure all actions are aligned to reinforce and send a consistent message. To help achieve this objective, an organization should encourage and support behavioral changes with the following operational changes:

- ❗ Modify the basic structure of the organization

- ❗ Examine the content of specific jobs

- ❗ Push authority and responsibility downward

- ❗ Broaden day-to-day communications

- ❗ Invest more in training

- ❗ Modify reward and recognition system

- ❗ Form labor-management partnerships

- ❗ Align various support services

- ❗ Make teamwork a way of life

Organization Structure and Job Content for High-Involvement

"Generally you can't get new strategies out of an old structure," says Rosabeth Moss Kanter. This observation is particularly true when an organization moves to the high levels of employee involvement.

In general, organization structure and job content follow this development:

! Traditional organizations are bureaucratic and hierarchical and include large supporting staff functions. Decision-making is carried out through a complex chain-of-command. Detailed standard procedures are used. Jobs are narrowly focused, rigidly defined and strictly managed. The federal government's current job classification system is an example of this rigidity. Ed Lawler has described some of the secondary effects attributed to rigid jobs. Lawler states that implicitly, if not explicitly, rigid job descriptions limit what employees are expected to do; discourage changes by requiring paperwork; encourage individuals to change jobs rather than acquire new competencies; give rise to inflated job descriptions and game playing; and depersonalize the value of the individual by placing value on the job.

! Teams are formed which are customer-driven. Teams can be responsible for carrying out day-to-day work, as in traditional work groups, or they can focus on special tasks and problems, as in improvement teams. Frequently teams begin quality efforts with customer identification, needs identification, and process clarification. That is exactly what happened at the Patent and Trademark Office, a 1992 QIP winner. In 1992, pilot traditional work groups were identified. The teams began by focusing on customers.

! As more involvement is sustained, lateral ties are formed across functions or across processes. Organizations sometimes move from a stovepipe functional configuration to a horizontal process organization to improve communication, customer service, etc. Organizations structured by process sometimes have a different problem. Highly trained professionals do not have a mechanism to develop as they once did by communicating with peers. Some process organizations are returning to a functional structure. The Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division at Lakehurst, New Jersey, a 1993 QIP winner, provides an example of where this reverse reorganization occurred. On the other hand, parts of AT&T have moved from a functional organizational to a customer-driven process organization with excellent results in customer satisfaction and efficiency.

The U.S. Customs Service, the Naval Air Systems Command, and the IRS are all in the process of organizing horizontally.

There is a tension between process and function which must be balanced. Organizations may try forming lateral ties to cure communications problems, not reorganize. Ties can be formed in planning, problem-solving, and tracking functions, as well as topical workshops for professionals, discussion groups, and conferences.

! High-involvement organizations have broadly-scoped jobs. Employees are frequently cross-trained and can perform a variety of jobs. This approach is used by private sector service firms to provide one-stop contact for customers. Service companies with customer contact operators are training these employees to handle almost all questions from the customer. Federal Express, AT&T Universal Card, L.L. Bean, to name a few, provide the information, technology, and training to make one-stop contact possible. In the federal arena, the Department of Agriculture is reorganizing its nine agencies that serve farmers into a one-stop Farm Services Agency. "Integrated Service" is also being used in planning customer service improvements in HHS for social services.

There are many case studies of how productivity and quality of work improved when employees were given the opportunity to carry out all of the steps of a process, rather than concentrating on one small task. The Sacramento Air Force Logistics Center reduced more than 30 job classifications by over a factor of 3 for their warehouse jobs. Workers who once performed only one job, such as packing, now carry out several functions to distribute orders. Cherry Point reports using cross-training to help smooth out workloads.

The 653d Communications-Computer Systems Group has undergone substantial reorganization under its quality effort. After analyzing and streamlining its major processes, it reorganized according to the major processes that delivered services to end-user customers. The Group has now eliminated three layers of supervision, leaving only two. All organizations below the top layer are now expected to operate as self-managed teams. In each case, the members of the unit elect their own leader and assume collective responsibility for direction and progress of work performed. All of these changes were made possible by the experience that employees had analyzing core processes and managing day-to-day work through formal and informal quality teams.

! High-involvement organizations have fewer levels of management as employees take on greater responsibilities for accomplishing their work

and for making decisions about how work will be accomplished. Agencies which have redesigned the work and the jobs associated with that work are also reporting reductions in levels of management. In these agencies, no longer do all decisions rise to the top. Most are stopping at where the work is being carried out. In the case of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, work was redesigned around product lines and the organization flattened to reflect that reorganization.

! At the highest levels of involvement, jobs are designed in the context of self-directed teams to give teams and individuals ownership of one or more processes and responsibility for a product or service. The team is frequently reexamining its purpose and always responding to a rapidly changing environment. In some high-involvement organizations, jobs are being designed around core competencies. Groups of employees in these organizations have the skill base needed for the work of the organization and are assigned to a temporary team to complete a particular task, such as product design, and then moved to another task and team to work on the next project.

Changes in organization structure and job content are called for by the Presidential Memorandum entitled "Streamlining the Bureaucracy" (11 September 1993). Specifically it calls for agency plans characterized by (a) delegation of authority, (b) decentralization, (c) empowerment of employees to make decisions, and (d) mechanisms to hold managers and employees accountable for their performance.

Authority Changes for High-Involvement

Changes in authority must be made in conjunction with changes in structures and job content. In traditional organizations authority rests with the manager; in high-involvement organizations more of that authority has been given to individuals and teams.

When inspectors at the OSHA Cincinnati Area Office used to investigate reports of unsafe working conditions, they checked every step with their supervisors, passed off cases to administrative personnel and other specialists, and were subject to second guessing. Now investigators own the case from start to finish. They ask for advice when they need it, but they are responsible for making decisions, preparing the paperwork, updating the files, arranging and conducting conferences with plant owners, determining appropriate fines, and assisting with prosecution, if necessary.

The Cherry Point Naval Aviation Depot has a unique and effective approach to empowering individuals. The Navy Department's aircraft depots traditionally ensure quality control through systematic inspection of all products shipped to its external customers, the fleet. Cherry Point has adopted a new approach to quality assurance by designating "artisans." Technicians who work on the parts of aircraft undergoing maintenance or repair are given artisan status if they meet objective standards. Their work must be determined to meet an acceptable quality level over a period of time. Each artisan certifies his or her own work by stamping the part with a personal identifying number. No further inspection of the work is required. The Depot routinely samples employees' work in order to verify the continued overall level of quality. If an individual's work does not measure up overall, his or her artisan status is subject to revocation.

The Depot reports that this approach toward quality assurance has greatly increased a sense of ownership and accountability by employees. Employees strongly support the new approach. As one technician commented, "I feel like I'm being treated as an adult. I know my job. When I put my personal stamp on the work, I'm saying that it's complete. And I'll tell you one thing, I'm a lot more likely to make sure it's done right when I'm signing off on it personally."

Broadened Communication for High-Involvement

Where does an agency begin to broaden its communication patterns in support of employee involvement? With the basics. Build on the initial steps to improve communication, and increase both the scope and breadth of communication to and from employees. Use as many channels as possible, both formal and informal. Don't let the grapevine be the principal source of information for employees. Provide easy access to management for individuals and groups. Focus on moving information across the organization, as well as up and down.

As employees form improvement teams and natural work teams, greater communication becomes more necessary. Open, two-way communication is required. More kinds of information need to be readily available to employees, particularly performance and budget data. Information that was traditionally kept very close to the vest of management is now communicated. Employees need to know how their work fits into the big picture and work toward performance goals for which they are held accountable. Communication between employees, customers and suppliers is also critical.

The key issue for all organizations is how to develop a communication strategy that will bring about open, two-way communication where employees know the big picture and understand how their work affects the organization. Early involvement of public affairs offices in transformation efforts will greatly help in developing this strategy. In fact, the public affairs office will become more involved as employee involvement increases because communication of the organization's values and quality activities will necessarily move out to suppliers and customers. Some examples from the private sector include Motorola, Baxter, and USAA, where their public affairs professionals meet yearly to explore their role in communicating change efforts.

Education and Training for High-Involvement: Success Factors

Training is emphasized in the recent NPR-related executive orders. In E.O. 12862 on Customer Service Standards, agencies are encouraged to provide training resources for programs needed by employees who directly serve customers. In E.O. 12871 on Labor-Management Partnerships, agencies are directed to provide training on alternate dispute resolution methods.

Employee involvement requires significant amounts of ongoing education and training. There are three factors which lead to successful education and training approaches for organizations. These are: (1) viewing education and training as an investment, not an expense; (2) carrying out education and training organization-wide, with equal emphasis on short- and long-term and on all job categories; and (3) viewing learning as a life-long activity for individuals, teams and agencies.

High-involvement organizations view training as an investment, not an expense. One percent of payroll is frequently used for employee training at organizations beginning involvement. World-class organizations often approach or exceed 3 percent of payroll--Xerox 4%, IBM 5%, Motorola 2.6% (see Erdman).

Along with investing high amounts in training, high-involvement organizations are noted for the fact that training dollars are distributed throughout all categories of employees, since all employees must acquire group skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, etc. On the other hand, in low-involvement organizations a disproportionately large amount of training is devoted to the highest ranking categories of employees.

The need for training does not decrease as organizations move toward self-directed teams. On the contrary, it needs to continue to expand. To be fast and flexible, organizations find that education/training of the workforce must continue.

The Defense Contract Management District, Northeast spent 2.7% of their budget on training in 1988, 2.3% in 89, 2.5% in 90, 1.3% in 91 and 2.4% in 92. By becoming more timely and productive the number of training "incidents" increased from 6,828 at $366 per incident to 12,000 at $258 per incident in 1992.

Education and Training Progression

When organizations begin their transformation effort, they need to focus on such basics as an understanding of the need for and fundamentals of change, identifying customers and their requirements, group dynamics and structured problem-solving tools, and group decision-making. Employees new to a job, including those that have been impacted by restructuring efforts, also need to receive training in basic job skills.

As the transformation progresses further and processes are reengineered, employees need to learn how to question assumptions and fully tap their creative potential. An increased premium is also placed on competency and skills training.

! As organizations flatten their structures and delegate authority to employees, it is important to ensure that employees have the skills and competencies to do their jobs with less direct supervision.

! As functional barriers are removed, employees need to learn a broader range of skills to interact effectively with employees in other specialties.

Education and Training Plan for High-Involvement

Planning for education/training is essential and it must be linked to the organization's goals and objectives. Plans should include provisions for:

Needs and skills assessment - Inventory skills, training needs, and training taken. The Defense Contract Management District Northeast of the Defense Logistics Agency conducts an annual automated training needs survey of its entire workforce. The results are used to identify course requirements,

determine site locations, schedule participants, and allocate training dollars. These needs are updated on a quarterly basis by each organization and reviewed by the District Training Committee. Field activity training coordinators work closely with their counterparts on the district staff to identify and obtain required training. Training needs are also identified through employee feedback to supervisors, by work progress reviews, and in some locations, through suggestion boxes.

Delivery options - Include using in-house personnel or external consultants. Quality skills can naturally be taught when new processes, equipment, or technologies are being introduced to the workforce. The IRS includes quality training in their regular management classes such as Leadership Excellence and Development (LEAD).

An effective approach is to have managers conduct the training. The Aeronautical Systems Center for Quality Education systematically teaches managers to train their personnel in quality.

The Naval Aviation Supply Office averaged 80 hours of training per employee for 1989-91. They also support attendance at evening college courses. The Aviation Supply Office has an informal training program which includes Lunch & Learn sessions where video presentations concerning quality concepts and techniques are shown and senior managers lead discussions on quality.

Reinforcement on-the-job - The classroom portion of courses should use real examples from the organization. Unless students use what they have been taught when they return to their job, very little will be retained.

Evaluation - Evaluations include both immediate and long-term. The Aviation Supply Office has both the training participants and their supervisor evaluate how well courses meet needs. Formal classroom programs are evaluated immediately upon completion. There is a one-month follow-up to assess effectiveness. Course evaluation may change the course, the instructional approach or the course administration. For contracted programs, the statement of work often requires pilot offerings at lower cost to be used to refine the course. When the pilot is conducted, a day is added to do an assessment with the participants and instructors.

The following topics are included in most training plans:

Introduction to quality concepts - One of the recommendations of the National Performance Review report is that the President's Management Council launch quality management "basic training" for all employees,

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starting with top officials and cascading through the entire executive branch. Typically covered are the fundamental principles of customer focus, employee involvement and empowerment, leadership, information and analysis, strategic planning, and performance measurement. Understanding of work as a process and the use of variation is usually presented along with the notion that many tools and techniques are available to manage-by-fact and to improve processes. The concept of cultural change is also discussed.

Quality implementation in the agency - The organization's vision and values need to be developed and an assessment done of where the organization currently stands. The methods the organization will use to implement change need to be understood by all employees. The timetable and expectations of all employees should be covered. The various roles of managers, supervisors, team leaders, team members and individuals in daily work should be explained.

Leadership and managing organizational change - Many organizations find that their managers' past training and experience is in relatively narrow technical areas and that they lack the knowledge and skills needed for leadership and managing change. Organizations therefore often provide training that introduces participants to quality concepts such as building trust and mutual respect; coaching and mentoring; encouraging risk-taking, openness, delegation and empowerment; listening skills; and systems thinking.

Group dynamics, team building, and interpersonal skills - Managers and employees involved with teams learn the fundamentals of group dynamics, analyze their individual style and its relationship to team dynamics and learn the stages of team formation and growth. Most organizations find sessions on running effective meetings and consensus decision-making to be invaluable aids. Teams also learn group problem-solving approaches. There are many useful problem-solving approaches, some more detailed than others. The subjects of resolving conflicts, listening, and giving feedback are often covered.

Tools and techniques - There are a large number of potential tools and techniques available for customer service improvement. Basic tools for generating ideas, such as brainstorming and making decisions, such as multivoting, are taught. Most frequently the seven graphical tools are taught to all team members. Statistical Process Control can be successfully taught to office employees as well as production employees. Teams associated with customer identification and measurement may want to train on various techniques such as service gap analysis. Flowcharting and process analysis, including identification of value-added or cost-only steps, can also be

covered. More frequently now, managers and planning teams are learning and using the seven planning and management tools.

Rewards and Recognition for High-Involvement

One of the best way to help employees understand that their contribution does make a difference to the success of an organization is through rewards and recognition. Reward and recognition systems need to be aligned with the organization's values. Promoting one thing and rewarding another can undermine the entire change effort.

Many organizations are now recognizing teams in addition to individuals, as teamwork increasingly becomes the way in which work gets done within an organization. To reinforce the importance of horizontal linkages within an organization, peer recognition is gaining acceptance, in addition to the more traditional form of recognition by managers.

Reward and recognition should reinforce employee involvement by not only focusing on such elements as participation rates or number of employees trained, but also on performance results. The results recognized should be customer-focused and outcome-oriented. Gainsharing is one way that agencies are rewarding performance.

For example, the Western Distribution Center of the Federal Supply Service (GSA) has a productivity gain sharing program. The center competes with the private sector for revenue and market share, and undertook gainsharing to improve customer service levels at the Center. Key performance indicators include timeliness of various types of orders shipped, accuracy of orders and productivity data.

Progress is monitored on a monthly basis, with the process audited each quarter to verify that productivity and quality requirements have been met or exceeded. Based upon the audit, information is shared with employees, and depending on their feedback, natural work teams or process action teams are formed to address areas of improvement. Over 60,000 hours have been saved and $542,860 in bonuses paid for exceeding standards.

The Center has also established peer recognition programs in some of its sections. Personnel are rewarded with cash and tokens of recognition by their peers on a monthly and quarterly basis.

In 1990, the Philadelphia Naval Aviation Supply Office's recognition system shifted dramatically. No longer are monetary awards given for high

performance ratings, nor did awards by only supervisors predominate. The new system placed emphasis on team effort and decouples performance on an individual basis from monetary awards. Evaluation is based on employees' contributions to agency goals.

Setting Up a Reward and Recognition System

In setting up new reward and recognition systems, agencies should involve employees, and unions which represent them, in the design. Frequently, improvement teams are specifically set up to redesign the recognition system.

Annual award ceremonies should be augmented by smaller celebrations and spontaneous recognition opportunities, since giving recognition and rewards as soon after the achievement as possible is critical. On-the-spot awards are being used in many agencies. The Federal Supply Service, Region 2, allows a manager to recognize an employee's accomplishments within 24 hours with a check of up to $250.

The government has more flexibility than in the past. Many agencies use small dollar, on-the-spot awards for specific acts. Agencies can also give time-off awards. For example, the Military Traffic Management Command gave its employees a day off in recognition of achievements in Desert Storm. The hallmark of Presidential Award winners is the use of many types of rewards and recognition simultaneously, and the continual improvement of reward and recognition systems (see White and Culbertson).

Publicity is also a means of recognition. The IRS Fresno Service Center has a Wall of Fame which lists winners and displays complimentary letters from taxpayers. Announcements in newsletters, "you made a difference" certificates, t-shirts, mugs, pens, good job buttons--there are many possibilities. Xerox has a bellringer award, where they literally ring a bell in the halls to announce a reward.

Labor-Management Partnerships and First Steps in a Labor-Management Partnership

As the National Performance Review observes, "we can only transform government if we transform the adversarial relationship that dominates federal union-management interaction into a partnership for reinvention and change."

Executive Order 12871 established the National Partnership Council and requires agencies to: create labor-management partnerships, promote consensual methods of dispute resolution, advocate that employees and union representatives become full partners with managers to identify problems and solutions to better serve their customers, and negotiate subjects in 5 U.S.C. 7106 (b) (1).

In high-involvement organizations, unions and management have found a win-win solution, one which allows them to work in a spirit of mutual cooperation, partnership and trust.

Some first steps in improving labor-management cooperation are to:

! Discuss areas of common interest and the objectives of organizational transformation

! Invite participation in planning the transformation, including how any rightsizing is to be accomplished and employee surveys conducted

! Communicate fully with union leaders concerning the transformation effort--transformation plans, activities, and progress

! Discuss roles of unions and management in training and briefings

! Agree on membership of councils, boards and teams

The following are agency examples of labor-management partnerships.

! Since 1988, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) have developed various mechanisms for alternate dispute resolution, including telephone mediation by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), followed by mediation/advisory arbitration if needed prior to proceeding to the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP); grievance mediation by FMCS; mediation/arbitration for term bargaining disputes; a mandatory 30 day cooling-off period for Unfair Labor Practices (ULP), followed by FMCS mediation; grievance mediation for any employee or organizational concern that either party can invoke (over 55% of grievances have been settled since 1991); and total quality management councils and labor management relations committees in each regional office and a "post-implementation" bargaining process for any mid-contract changes.

HHS and NTEU in their consolidated regional office bargaining unit are using interest-based bargaining for term negotiations. Two contract

articles were bargained as a pilot test in 1993, and the parties are now engaged in interest-based bargaining on fifteen additional articles of the contract. A unique feature is the use of facilitated conference calls to identify interests, issues and options.

! The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the Department of Transportation currently has three partnership agreements in place with the Professional Airways System Specialists/Airway Facilities union, the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, and the National Association of Air Traffic Specialists. A neutral outside expert has provided training in group processes, consensus decision-making, and other intervention services to facilitate labor and management working together in partnership. In addition, a full curriculum of collaborative labor-management training courses have been developed and are regularly offered through FAA's Center for Management Development in Florida.

A recent success story for FAA is that the Quality Through Partnership (QTP) process was used to design and develop the entirely new radar control facility in Southern California that will consolidate five separate facilities. All phases of development and staffing of the new facility were handled with the union through the QTP process that resulted in it being ready to open within the targeted timeframe and budget. The QTP process has also been used to handle significant changes in air traffic communications technology, training, and safety equipment.

! In 1993, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) signed a Total Quality Organization Partnership Agreement. It addresses a systems approach to actively improve work processes; empowerment from the perspective of the individual and the organization; an evolutionary change in the relationships among IRS managers, the Union and employees; and the quality of worklife that will result in enhanced productivity and employee pride in the workplace.

In November 1993, the IRS Commissioner, IRS Deputy Commissioner, and the NTEU President jointly announced the location of 23 Customer Service Centers and five Submission Processing Centers, operational components of the IRS which are central to the bureau's successful reinvention. This decision and announcement impact approximately 22,000 IRS jobs. Concurrently, they announced a cooperatively developed workforce investment agreement founded on a shared belief in the value of the organization's

human resources and a common interest in ensuring that this workforce was prepared to effectively perform the jobs of the future.

! The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) previously had a Labor-Management Committee which has now seen its role expanded from one of a dispute resolution mechanism to one involved in many policy decisions, from banning smoking in the building to the delayering of middle management. OPM signed a partnership agreement on January 31, 1994. Union representatives are part of task forces on marketing of OPM services, reinventing government, and other agency priorities. In the first of these collaborations, union representatives helped to incorporate employee comments to OPM's new mission statement.

! In 1991, the Hoover Dam management, Department of Interior and the American Federation of Government Employees Local 1978 instituted a labor-management partnership arrangement that has virtually eliminated unfair labor practices and grievances. The time previously devoted to dispute resolution is now being used more constructively to resolve problems before they become disputes.

! At Letterkenny Army Depot, management and multiple unions have developed a charter that forms a corporate board to jointly manage the Public Works Center. The board administers the Center as though it were a for-profit business, and encourages employees and managers to expand their horizons through educational incentives, alternative worksites and self-directed work teams.

Aligning Other Support Services for High-Involvement

Employees will need new forms of support and services as the organization adopts higher involvement strategies. All human resource support functions and staff services will be expected to change. In particular the organization must look at these processes and policies:

Recruitment, hiring and orientation - Define position requirements more precisely; hire for customer service and quality orientation. Provide systematic training (not just on-the-job training); introduce values, vision, and quality principles. At the Patent and Trademark Office, an employee team designed a hiring strategy for selecting supervisory lawyers. Team members are part of an interview process which requires applicants to demonstrate interpersonal skills. The selecting official makes the final selection based on the team's recommendation.

Promotions - Use criteria which emphasize quality leadership, customer service, coaching, and other traits to send a clear message as to what the organization values.

Diversity management - Move from an organization which asks employees to adapt to it, to one which adapts to the employees. The President launched his administration by appointing cabinet and senior officials who "look like America." The message is that a government that strives for the best must continue to break down stubborn barriers that keep us from employing, training, or promoting the best people.

The National Performance Review report recommends that a directive be issued committing the administration to greater equal opportunity and diversity in the federal workforce, and instructing agency heads to build equal employment opportunity and affirmative employment elements into their agency strategic plans and performance agreements.

Baxter International Inc. has a Diversity Management Director. The company has instituted an Inside Advantage Program where any blue-collar employee interested in going into management may call to get information. They also require hiring officers to explain to any internal job applicant why they did not receive the job.

Performance management - Frequent feedback with no surprises. Organizations can move to 360-degree evaluation, which includes appraisal from everyone--customers, suppliers, colleagues, subordinates and supervisors. Salary decisions are often separated from feedback and planning.

Many agencies are aware of Dr. Deming's belief that most employees work within a broad band of performance and that distinctions within that band are meaningless and destructive (see Sholtes, 1987). His arguments against formalized appraisals (as opposed to frequent discussions between supervisors and subordinates) include:

! Increasing fear and a negative effect on employees leaving them bitter, crushed, dejected and less productive for some time after the evaluation

! Discouraging teamwork while encouraging short-term outcomes

Agencies are taking a variety of different approaches to performance appraisals. For example: the FAA has a pilot program in which critical elements describe quality behavior such as "strives continually to improve customer satisfaction. Continually seeks feedback from customers."

Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, Lakehurst assigns an "in the system" rating to most managers. The other two ratings are "outside the system high" and "outside the system low." Criteria for a high rating include true excellence in teamwork and other quality accomplishments. A similar approach is used for the general workforce and wage-grade employees--most receiving an in the system rating. (As an aside, it should be noted that employees rated in the system or high receive either a cash award or a salary increase.) All performance agreements include critical elements to emphasize the fact that quality is an integral part of every employee's job.

IRS includes quality expectations in almost all SES performance plans and in the evaluations which determine merit awards. The National Security Agency is using the Baldrige Award (President's Award) criteria for its SES performance plans.

The Naval Aviation Supply Office uses an annual behavioral survey to pinpoint areas for improvement to assist supervisors in empowering their employees. Supervisors are required to develop individual action plans to expand their employees' authority to make decisions, provide them with positive assistance and incentives, and other actions. Feedback meetings between supervisors at all levels and employees open up communications and provide them with a forum to discuss levels of empowerment.

Employee development - Provide flexible assignments, broaden career paths to get horizontal movement, take advantage of generalist categories, and cross-train. Classification decisions can be delegated.

Redeployment and retraining - Develop broad-based job opportunities for employees displaced through process improvements, delayering and rightsizing.

Family-friendly workplace options - Flexible work options, dependent care services, leave sharing, etc.

In addition, support services outside of human resources must be addressed; e.g., procurement, travel, and information management systems. Meeting the needs of internal customers so that they can better service external customers in a timely and effective way should become the primary focus of these services.

Teams for High-Involvement

Teamwork is one of most common and visible characteristics of high-involvement organizations. Teams are important because:

!   Employees learn that several people working together as a team can maximize the results of a group compared to each one acting alone.

!   Teams provide a basis for focusing the efforts of several people in a manageable forum to resolve specific problems or issues.

!   They provide a structured and systematic environment in which to exercise employee involvement on a routine basis. They also provide a forum for learning how to work together in day-to-day activity.

As organizations move to high-involvement, teams increasingly become a way of life. Groups of workers frequently form as teams temporarily to solve specific issues without express approval of management. Intact work groups themselves become self-managed.

The Public Services and Administration (PSA) of the Patent and Trademark Office has designated a natural work team in each of its component divisions. In each case, the natural work team is an existing branch or unit that meets at least once a week as a quality team. When meeting as teams, the groups identify and work on issues that affect the organization's ability to achieve its overall goals. The teams use quality tools such as group decision-making and statistical techniques where appropriate. When meeting as a natural work group, the unit's supervisor serves as a facilitator and coach rather than acting as a traditional manager. All members of the group are expected to assume ownership for establishing direction for the effort and ultimate solutions. The PSA hopes that these pilots will evolve to self-managed teams.

The NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, has over 150 workforce teams continuously improving their processes. They have made numerous technical and administrative improvements in space shuttle mission operations, flight design, control center operations, reconfiguration management, and contractor business efficiencies. There were savings of $13 million in FY 92, $28.6 million in FY 93, and expected savings of $98 million by FY 96. In administrative and support areas, there has been a 44 percent improvement in maintenance response time for computer and telecommunications services, a 50 percent reduction in approval signatures required for procurement activity, and a 37 percent decrease in source document errors associated with "common use services carrier accounts."

The Naval Aviation Depot at Cherry Point, North Carolina, encourages front-line managers to establish informal teams wherever it makes sense. Such teams are prevalent in all aspects of the Depot, particularly in the front-line operations of aircraft maintenance and repair. The leadership at the Depot report that the wide experience that employees gained participating in formal process action teams made it possible to operate with many informal teams.

At the Department of Labor's San Francisco Region of the Wage and Hour Division, teams have become a way of life. The Regional Director at San Francisco estimates that over 60 percent of the Region's work is now carried out through teams, most of which are self-directing. Employees often form teams on their own to tackle widespread labor standards enforcement issues. They do not require specific approval from top management to do so.

Characteristics of High-Involvement Teams

The use of groups of employees to address specific issues or problems is not new. Most organizations rely on team-based operations to varying degrees. In the new environment of transformation, teams have certain characteristics not always found in more traditional organizations, such as the following:

! Team members have a sense of shared responsibility and accountability for achieving the team's objectives rather than waiting for direction from above.

! The team leader serves as a coach/mentor/facilitator rather than a traditional "boss" giving direction.

! The team has clear and manageable results-oriented objectives and purposes based upon customer needs.

! The team relies heavily on proven group dynamic principles such as active listening, mutual respect, honesty, and dialogue.

! Teams have clear support from top management, and the necessary authority to take actions to achieve their objectives.

! The team is provided with adequate resources. This includes time for necessary team activities, such as training.

Setting Up Teams

Most people think of teams as only formal improvement teams. But employees can be involved in many types of teams, including those in traditional work groups.

Critical to the success of teams in an organization is the process which is followed to set up and support teams. The following are key considerations.

- ! **Determine membership and specific purpose**. When determining the purpose, consider how it fits into the organization's overall mission and goals. Membership may be required or voluntary. Teams can vary in size; usually 5-12 people are most effective.

- ! **Establish the boundaries for the team's work**. The team's scope may be limited or broad. Teams may be at the unit level or cross-functional.

- ! **Establish the authority and responsibility of the team**. Members may have low or high authority and responsibility, or something in between.

- ! **Set timeframes and reporting requirements**. Teams may be permanent or of limited duration. Timeframes for completion of project phases are typically established.

- ! **Train team members in basics of teamwork as well as necessary job skills**. Providing resources and the necessary support to teams is essential.

- ! **Develop a baseline for the process under review**. After changes are implemented, a comparison against the baseline can determine the degree of improvement.

- ! **Monitor and assist the team**. This should be done with the intent of helping to overcome barriers and providing information related to constraints.

- ! **Implement the team's suggestions**. When the team provides periodic updates to management, the likelihood increases that constraints/obstacles can be worked out and more recommendations accepted.

- ! **Celebrate the team's suggestions**. Recognition should reinforce the organization's mission, vision and values.

Measuring Progress and Results

Agencies should have measures that track their progress in involving the workforce and the results achieved. These measures should be aligned with the strategic plan and performance improvement initiatives (e.g., NPR report, associated executive orders and Presidential memoranda, and the GPRA). For example, Executive Order 12871 (Labor-Management Partnerships) requires agencies to evaluate progress and improvements in organizational performance resulting from the labor-management partnerships.

Measures of involvement frequently include number of team participants, number of recommendations adopted, cost saving resulting from recommendations, number of employees trained from the eligible population and number of employees recognized/rewarded by category. Measures may also include indicators of quality of worklife, such as safety rates, absenteeism, turnover rates, and number of grievances by type.

Performance measures associated with support services are also important. These might address time to hire, number and types of employee complaints, and a variety of process errors. Along with customer satisfaction surveys, organizations often conduct culture or climate surveys. In the latter case, the goal is not only to improve the quality of worklife, but also the level of organizational performance.

As with all surveys, employee satisfaction surveys should be conducted only when a plan has been developed for the use of the results. This plan must include feedback to the employees and the methods by which improvements will be made based on the results of the survey. Surveys can be purchased from private vendors or designed in-house. Someone familiar with survey techniques and requirements should be involved. Be sensitive to the fact that employees often distrust surveys because they are not sure of the confidentiality of their answers.

When Work Is a Treat

The authoritarian work style is failing. High-performance organizations are using a management style which shows that employees are respected and valued. They acknowledge that employees are their most valuable resource, and create a culture that encourages involvement and enables employees to make more decisions about the way they do their work.

Workplaces are changing in all institutions, private and public. Government workplaces are changing to provide more employee involvement, more

sensitivity to family issues, more egalitarian approaches, more fun, and more trust between management and employees (see Levering and Moskowitz).

We can try to make work a treat for our employees. We can provide growth opportunities, a sense of job ownership, pride in work/organization, openness/fairness, and camaraderie/friendliness. As an organization is transformed, so too must the workforce be transformed.

Phases of Implementation

This module has presented the development of employee involvement and empowerment as a phased strategy. Early steps to involve employees in the process, taken during Phase 1, are intended to establish a foundation for integrating full involvement and empowerment into all facets of the organization.

During Phase 2, the initial efforts should be in place and organizations should be taking steps to ensure that they become integrated into the fabric of the organization. Thus, for instance, the organization should not only have developed new training programs to introduce employees to the principles of quality and teamwork, but should have begun to expand their entire training effort to embrace all skills and competencies. Similarly, during Phase 2, the organization should have begun to analyze job content and authority of line employees, and broadened communication throughout. Also, teams should begin to be a common way of tackling problems.

During Phase 3, the organization should have begun to address the more complex aspects of involvement. During this stage, most employees will feel a sense of personal empowerment and understand how their work relates to the organization's overall objectives. Employees should be forming teams on their own without express approval of management to address problems and opportunities for improvement. And in many cases employees will be operating in self-managed teams, either as intact work groups or in specific process or problem-solving teams.

Summary

While employee involvement efforts start out with traditional work groups, formal teams and other initiatives common to many customer-driven organizations, they need to become integrated into the fabric of the organization. Teamwork becomes a way of life. Involvement efforts build on each other and to reinforce this effort, support structures need to be aligned. As organizations flatten their structure, empowerment opportunities will increase, enabling employees to better serve their customers. Everyone working together in partnership--managers, union representatives and employees--can help transform government.

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Techniques

A. Reward and Recognition Case Study

An exhausted publications staff gathered in the conference room. They had just produced an extensive technical report for Congress. Because of pending legislation affecting one of the agency's key programs, they had been asked to complete the entire report, which required extensive coordination with several divisions, in half the time normally allotted for this type of task.

At precisely 10:00 Jake Rimmel, the Director of Publications entered the conference room beaming, "I know how hard you've all worked on this publication. Last night, I met with Dr. Blythe (the agency head) and he has agreed to give each of you three days of administrative leave over the next two weeks--you all deserve this for a wonderful job done. I've got to run to a meeting now. Enjoy!"

After Jake left, the team began to talk...

! This is great! I can sure use the rest after our late night work.

! You know, my wife can't get any time off over the next 10 days because she's involved in wrapping up some major sales for her company, and my kids are in school. Spending time <u>alone</u> isn't my idea of fun.

! Maybe Jake would postpone your leave until a better time for you, but I could understand if you wouldn't want to appear ungrateful.

! Maybe the rest of you are free to take off for 3 days over the next couple weeks, but I know I won't be able to without making my supervisor angry. I have neglected two important customers while we've been working on this project and my supervisor called yesterday to set deadlines for these projects.

! Sorry the rest of you seem to have problems, but I'm going to enjoy this time off.

Questions for Discussion

1. What did Jake do that was positive?

    Possible responses:
    a. Jake made an effort to recognize his team's special contribution and to reinforce its effort.
    b. He acknowledged his appreciation of the team's work.

2. What could Jake have done to more effectively reinforce his team?

    Possible responses:
    a. Built from personal knowledge of their likes and dislikes.
    b. Asked them what they prefer.
    c. Asked their spouses what they prefer.
    d. Identified a reinforcement that had more time flexibility.

3. What negative impacts can a poorly chosen group recognition have?

    Possible response:
    a. It could cause conflict within a team.
    b. Without any consultation, it could reinforce the belief that all decisions are made from above.

4. How do recognition activities like this relate to an organization's reward system?

    Open discussion.

Adapted from "Making TQM Work: The Human Factor," developed by the Society for Human Resource Management and the Center for Organizational Development, Inc.

B. Team and Empowerment Case Study

Rick Fratz brought the 650 employees together from the Grants and Loan Program Division in the agency auditorium. A damaging GAO report had confirmed what he and the agency top leaders already knew: high administrative costs, a lack of careful monitoring in the agency's major grant and loan programs, and an adversarial relationship with many state offices had contributed to an escalation in both waste and abuse in the past 3 years. In addition, increasing complaints about lack of timely access to agency information and burdensome procedures from agency customers signaled that the agency's major program was in trouble.

After explaining the major findings of the GAO report and supplemental information from the agency's own evaluation staff, Rick said: "I know we have suffered some unexpected cuts in the past 2 years, but we cannot use that as an excuse." "We have some very tough challenges ahead of us. By this time next year we must reduce the costs of administering our program by 15 percent, revamp our monitoring program to target results rather than procedural compliance, reduce customer complaints by 25 percent and form strong partnerships with states to end the endless finger pointing that exists today."

"Like me, I know many of you have spent most of your career in this division. I met late last night with the top leadership of the agency to discuss options. We are aware from site visits to private corporations and to other agencies of the amazing results employee teams have had all across the country. It comes down to this -- a team has better ideas than any one person. In addition, no one understands the grants and loan process or the needs of our customers better than YOU--the people who perform the processes and serve customer needs day in and day out. Starting immediately, I would like to form 6 teams: a grant processing team, a loan processing team, a customer satisfaction team, a monitoring team, a federal/state team and an administrative cost team. Some of your work will overlap so you will have to coordinate your efforts."

"Our entire leadership is willing to do whatever is necessary to support this effort. I have two questions for you: First, are you willing to work to make this change happen?" The entire staff spontaneously broke out in a resounding affirmative.

"Great!" Rick shouted. "Let me ask you my second question: Do you believe that you can help to meet the goals? Do you believe that you can personally make a difference?" Again the staff enthusiastically responded. Rick continued, "I want to thank you for your enthusiasm and express my own personal commitment to this effort." He then fielded a number of questions from the employees.

In the months that followed, the Grants and Loan Program Division was a changed place. Members from each team came into work an hour early to meet. New teams had been formed on spin-off issues. Managers worked side-by-side with employees. Everyone was committed to achieving these goals.

A year later only minor improvements had occurred in all the areas that were being tracked and none of the goals had been reached.

Questions for Discussion

1. Based on your knowledge of teams and employee involvement, what did Rick do that would support a high-involvement culture?

    Possible responses:
    a. Rick provided leadership support.
    b. He gave employees the opportunity to take ownership -- to have involvement in the work.
    c. He offered business information at the initial meeting.
    d. He was a part of the team -- not an aloof manager.

2. Why do you think that the staff was unable to achieve their goals?

    Possible responses:
    a. They did not receive any type of training.
    b. They were not provided with access to information that would help them improve their business. For example, there was data on the number of customer complaints, but the team was not given raw or summary data to help understand what the complaints were.

3. If you were Rick, what might you have suggested that could have helped the team to meet its goal?

    Open discussion.

Adapted from "Making TQM Work: The Human Factor," developed by the Society for Human Resource Management and the Center for Organizational Development, Inc.

C. The "Four Hour House" Video

This video shows a competition between two teams to build a house from scratch in 4 hours. It's a good illustration of how people working together can meet challenging goals.

For complete information on video acquisition/licensing, call or write to:

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